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ABSTRACT

This booklet discusses mentoring in general, describes a particular mentoring program, and describes mentoring efforts around the country. The first section about mentoring in general focuses on mentoring as an old idea and current trends in mentoring. The next section describes the Norwalk Mentor Program in Connecticut which began in 1986 as an outgrowth of a well-established adopt-a-school program. The six-step process used to begin and maintain this program and to evaluate the success of the relationship between mentors and students is presented. These steps involve: (1) recruitment and screening; (2) orientation and training; (3) matching mentors and students and responsibilities; (4) weekly sessions; (5) evaluation; and (6) year-end celebrations and renewal. The buddy system, transfers and moves, summer activities, family involvement, and new directions for Norwalk's mentor program are also described. The third section presents an overview of mentoring efforts around the country. Also included are: a resource list; sample recruitment letter; sample mentor profile; mentor pledge; sample mentor agreement; sample teacher request for a mentor; sample parent permission letter; sample mentor evaluation form; and references. (ABL)

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How to Start a Student Mentor Program

Susan G. Weinberger

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Weinberger coordinates the oldest school-business partnership program in Connecticut, involving hundreds of volunteers from local business and industry, university alumni associations, churches, and municipal and not-for-profit agencies who serve as mentors to children and youth in every school in the Norwalk district. The Norwalk Mentor Program won the 1990 National Creative/Exemplary Program Award from NAPE.

Weinberger received her B.S. from Carnegie-Mellon University, her M.A.T. from Manhattanville College, and her Ed.D. in Educational Management from the University of Bridgeport. She is a consultant and frequent speaker on collaborative efforts between businesses and schools. Her most recent publication is *The Mentor Handbook* (Educational Resources Network, 1990), a resource guide for individuals who wish to serve as mentors.

Series Editor, Derek L. Burleson

How to Start a Student Mentor Program

by
Susan G. Weinberger

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Introduction

Mentoring is "the master key" that can unlock the attention of at-risk students and make them receptive to learning.

– Ron Ferguson
Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University

School/business partnerships have been flourishing since the early 1980s, resulting in many benefits to our schools and communities. President Reagan gave the idea a boost when he launched the National Partnership in Education Program in 1983, with a challenge to business and industry to form partnerships with every public and private school in America. Today the National Association of Partners in Education, Inc. estimates that there are 200,000 partnerships in the United States.

Partnership programs are voluntary, long-term relationships between the private sector and schools to help the latter meet educational needs and build a positive image of the school in the community. In small towns and big cities, dedicated volunteers from business and industry have shared their resources and expertise with the country's classrooms. Such activities have served to give participating companies a good feeling about their involvement and contributions to the community.

Recently, however, leaders in business and industry have been questioning whether "feeling good" about their partnership activities is adequate for addressing the critical issues facing our nation's schools.

Leaders have questioned the long-term results of partnerships, the evaluative procedures to assess the results, and the inability to prepare a skilled workforce and stem the alarming dropout rate.

Now, a special form of school-business collaboration – mentoring – is taking partnerships in new and productive directions aimed at benefiting students directly. The mentoring component of the partnership movement is a one-on-one commitment by volunteers to improve the self-esteem, attitudes, and attendance of youngsters, beginning as early as kindergarten.

The need to provide our students with the work habits and behavior patterns that once typified the American society has never been greater. The unprecedented changes that have occurred in the character of the American family, especially the dramatic increase in the number of single-parent families, mean that many parents are no longer as involved as they once were with their children and their education.

Considering that today's fourth-grader will be in the workforce in the year 2000, we need to provide mentoring opportunities as early in the school experience as possible. The benefits are reciprocal. Mentors benefit from the satisfaction of having a positive impact on a youngster's life; students benefit by being successful in school, by staying in school, and by feeling better about themselves. Everyone wins in the process.

This fastback will describe the steps in setting up a mentor program, based on the author's six-year effort in developing such a program in the Norwalk Public Schools in Connecticut. The program in this urban community, with an enrollment of 10,000 youngsters, matches mentors and students in a one-on-one relationship that endures throughout the school years until high school graduation. It begins as early as kindergarten, where at-risk children can first be identified.

For those interested in setting up a mentor program, additional information is found in the Resources section at the end of this fastback. The Appendix contains sample forms used in the Norwalk Mentor Program, which can be adapted for use in other school districts.

About Mentoring

Mentoring is an old idea that works. The word "mentor" comes from the Greek for "steadfast" and "enduring." It was the name given by Homer to the man Odysseus entrusted with the guidance of his son, Telemachus. Since then, the term "mentor" has become synonymous with a wise teacher, guide, and friend.

The Education Commission of the States has listed mentoring as one of the five short-term imperatives for reversing the high dropout rate among high school students (ECS 1988). In his study of mentoring with disadvantaged youth, Flaxman (1988) concluded that mentoring is a powerful way to provide adult contacts for youth who are isolated from adults in their schools, homes, communities, and work places. And Bernard Lefkowitz, in "Tough Change: Growing Up on Your Own in America" (1989), found that caring adults were an important factor for the youth who survived the streets and went on to lead successful mainstream lives.

In March 1990 former U.S. Secretary of Labor Elizabeth Dole told business leaders that education programs that involve mentoring work better, provide more benefits, and change more lives because they provide one-on-one relationships between at-risk youth and a caring role model. Mentors, she added, are not writing education policy. They simply share their wisdom and experience. They tell young people of the connection between staying in school and getting a good job. They serve as successful role models, pointing out the pitfalls

and potholes on the road of life. And they make a difference. Secretary Dole's comments became known as the Ten Percent Challenge. She challenged America's businesses, both large and small, to involve at least 10% of their employees in some type of mentoring program with at-risk youth.

The United Way of America and the One to One Foundation also are involved in strengthening and expanding mentoring programs with the assistance of local United Ways. Their challenge is ambitious: "By 1995, every young person who might benefit from a mentoring relationship will have the opportunity to be matched with a caring partner" (One to One 1991).

Planned mentoring programs for youth vary widely in the duration, frequency, and intensity of the relationships, as well as in the quality and goals of the programs. Mentoring programs usually work to improve self-esteem and attendance among younger children, to prevent older students from becoming pregnant or going to jail, and to help students make a successful transition from high school to the workplace or college. Mentoring is a supportive relationship between a school-aged child and an adult. The mentor offers support, guidance, and assistance as a role model or friend. The students identify with their mentors and, as a result, gradually become able to do for themselves what their mentors have done for and with them.

In the next chapter is a description of one mentor program that has been operating successfully for six years.

The Norwalk Mentor Program

The Norwalk Mentor Program began in 1986 as an outgrowth of a well-established adopt-a-school program. It is based on the assumption that every classroom teacher in America can identify children who are potential dropouts. While they may not drop out physically at age six or seven, they have done so emotionally, socially, or educationally. These youngsters need an advocate, someone to care about them and to spend an hour a week of special time with them.

Potential dropouts are from middle-income families as well as from poor homes. There is no simple demographic characteristic that identifies them. They may be from intact families or broken homes. They are, in fact, in every urban, suburban, and rural community in this country. However, most of these students are not involved in such programs as Artistically Talented, Academically Talented, Speech and Hearing, String Music, Special Education, and other "pull-out" efforts. Rather, these youth are falling through the cracks. They could make it, but not without an "extra push" from someone who cares.

The Norwalk Mentor Program has as its specific goals to improve the self-esteem, attitudes, and attendance of at-risk students from kindergarten through grade 12. It uses a six-step process to begin and maintain the program and to evaluate the success of the relationship between mentors and students.

Step 1: Recruitment and Screening

Prospective volunteers are recruited from local business and industry. If a company has a personnel or human resources director, this person is asked to assist in the recruiting process. An internal memo, flier, or poster advertises the program and invites those interested to an information session in a comfortable conference room at the worksite, where the school district's Mentor Program director outlines the goals and explains how the program works.

Who make good mentors? To be considered positive role models, prospective mentors must be stable persons themselves with positive self-esteem, a good employment record, and a willingness to accept responsibility. They must be good listeners and non-judgmental. They must be able to cope with stressful situations and be tolerant of alternate lifestyles. They must have no record of alcohol or drug abuse. Some employees who volunteer for the mentor program may be having difficulty in their own personal or professional life. It is important to make sure that they are counseled not to become involved as mentors until their own problems are resolved.

A mentor's role is not to interfere with school policies and procedures, nor to provide solutions to all the issues facing students today. Each mentor also is cautioned at the outset not to expect immediate and dramatic changes in attitudes, self-esteem, or attendance.

Not all mentors come from business and industry. Municipal agencies, local church groups, retired teacher organizations, college alumni associations, and fraternal organizations also are good sources for prospective mentors. Since these groups do not usually have their own personnel departments, screening these individuals becomes the responsibility of the school district. Careful checks of criminal records, recommendations from present and previous employers, a personal interview, and references are required. Most school districts have a process to screen volunteers who serve in classrooms as aides, tutors, and library assistants. A similar procedure can be adopted for mentors who do not come from companies.

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The use of senior citizens as mentors poses special problems. In most school districts, senior citizens are invaluable "treasures" who interact as volunteers with students and staff. In Norwalk, however, many of these individuals head south for the winter months in search of warmer climates or are often unwilling to travel during inclement weather. Others suffer from bouts of poor health. While senior citizens can be excellent role models, those whose attendance is inconsistent at the weekly mentoring sessions should be invited to volunteer for other assignments at school rather than mentoring.

When the Norwalk Mentor Program began, we approached participants in our already established adopt-a-school program as the first source for potential recruits. Communities that do not have such an established program should call on the local Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis, and the United Way to assist in identifying prospective mentors.

Step 2: Orientation and Training

Individuals who show an interest in mentoring and who pass the screening phase are invited to a morning breakfast meeting at the school where they will be matched with a student. At this meeting the mentors receive a complete orientation, conducted by the principal. At the meeting the mentors are given several handouts: a school calendar that includes school vacations, a typical schedule for students at each grade level, hours of operation, cancellation procedures due to inclement weather, a map of the school, and a list of teaching and support staff (including the secretary, nurse, psychologists, social workers, and guidance counselors). The principal reviews standard school policies and explains how mentors are matched with students. An important part of the orientation is explaining how and where the mentors sign in when they arrive at school each week and the notification procedures when either the mentor or the student can not make a scheduled meeting. The school secretary communicates absences of either the mentor or student to each other. Mentors take

a tour of the whole building and find out where the designated areas are for them to meet with students during their weekly sessions.

Before the end of the meeting, mentors complete a questionnaire giving their first and second choice of day and time for meeting their students; their preference for grade level, sex, and race of student; and any special interests or talents they have that might be helpful in matching them with a student. Mentors also sign an agreement that indicates each will:

- Attend a training session before beginning in the program.
- Be on time for scheduled meetings.
- Notify the school office if unable to keep a weekly appointment.
- Engage in the relationship with an open mind.
- Accept assistance from school staff.
- Keep discussions with their student confidential.
- Seek help and advice from school support staff if needed.
- Notify the program director of changes in employment, address, or telephone number.
- Notify the principal or program director of any problems or difficulties with the relationship.

Each mentor must show proof of having had a chest X-ray or tuberculin tine test within three years prior to beginning in the program. This is a policy in Norwalk, Connecticut, for all school volunteers. The school provides the tine test, administered by school nurses, to any individual who has not had one.

When the volunteers complete the paperwork, they receive a mentor pin to wear at school, which quickly identifies them and eliminates the need to fill out a visitor's pass. They also are presented with a small tent sign to place on their desk at work that indicates they are members of the Norwalk Mentor Program. This simple gesture not only gives them recognition but also serves as a means of recruiting new mentors from their companies.

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Each volunteer mentor is invited to an all-day training session in a central location. At that time, supervisory staff and external resource persons provide all the information necessary to prepare the mentors for a successful and productive year. The agenda includes the following topics:

- How to improve listening skills
- School resources available to mentors
- Substance-abuse education programs
- Cultural sensitivity
- How to read to and with students
- Mentor strategies that work
- Profile of the typical student
- Benefits of mentoring
- Role of teachers in mentor-student relationships
- Student records and confidentiality
- Role of the parents of students
- After-school limitations and field trips
- How to instill self-esteem
- Liability issues
- Indicators of progress in the relationship

Step 3: Matching and Responsibilities

While the mentors are being trained, the principal, teachers, and school support teams in each building begin the process of recommending students for mentoring. They fill out a Request Form for each student they think would benefit from having a mentor. They record relevant information about the student's family background, personal interests, and hobbies; also reasons why the student would benefit from the mentoring experience and strategies mentors might use to assist their student.

Since there are many more students needing mentors than there are available mentors, it has been necessary to establish selection criteria;

but there still is a waiting list. With building self-esteem and dropout prevention as the primary goals of the program, priority is given to those students who exhibit one or more of the following characteristics:

- one-parent family with little or no support
- no parents, being raised by someone else with little or no support
- intact family with history of drug or alcohol abuse
- poor attendance at school
- increased hostility
- frequent trips to the principal's office
- increased detentions
- poor attitude
- lack of self-esteem
- inability to take risks
- poor eye contact

At each school site, all administrative details relating to the mentor program rest with one individual. Some principals prefer to do this, but in most cases the school social worker assumes the liaison role. In one case, a teacher's aide is the link to the company or organization that is providing mentors. Also, each company or organization providing mentors designates one person as liaison. This person is usually someone from the Personnel or Human Resources Department and does not have to be a mentor. The liaisons play a critical role in matching mentors and students, arranging for replacement of mentors, conducting evaluations, coordinating year-end celebrations, and scheduling teacher/mentor/parent meetings and other functions.

Once the students have been selected for the program, the principal meets each student individually, explains the program, and asks if he or she would like a mentor. In the six years since the program began, no youngster has ever refused this opportunity. In fact, many students not in the program often ask, "When can I have a mentor?" The parent or guardian must give written permission for his or her child to participate in the program.

Each school then sends a Mentor Assignment Letter to the mentors indicating their student's name, sex, age, grade, classroom number, teacher's name, and the date and time for the first meeting. Also, suggestions for "ice breakers" to use during the first sessions are mailed with the assignment letter. Following are examples of ice-breakers.

1. Interview your student and invite him or her to do same with you. Ask where he or she lives, number and ages of siblings. Ask about favorite foods, books, TV shows, sports. Start with familiar topics, and follow any leads the student gives you.

2. Bring in a family photo album and use it as a way of introducing yourself and your family, your hobbies, your vacations, etc.

3. Ask your student to take you on a tour of the building and explain the different activities that go on there. This gives the student the opportunity to take the lead in conversation and makes the initial relationship one in which you are learning too.

4.Swap photos with your student to share with family and friends. This will serve as a reminder when you are not there.

5. Give your student a small pocket calendar and note the day each week when the two of you will be meeting. Discuss the time of day and location for your get-togethers.

Step 4: Weekly Sessions

When the weekly sessions begin, mentors are released from their jobs for a minimum of one hour a week during the workday to travel to the school, where they enter into a special relationship with their students. So what goes on during the weekly one-hour meetings at school?

Since this is a program for building self-esteem, most mentors use the time to read to their students, take them to the school library, play games, work out in the gymnasium, practice with musical instruments, walk outside on nice days, or just talk. Some become involved with homework, book reports, and other classroom assignments; however, this is not intended to be a tutorial program.

School libraries have a special "Mentor Corner," which contains a suggested reading list by grade level, games, crayons, paper, and other materials that are readily accessible for mentors.

For those mentors who need more direction in structuring their hour-long sessions, we suggest breaking up the time into four 15-minute activities: 1) Talking. What happened in school this week? What do you need help with today? 2) Reading. Sharing a library book or letting the student read to you. 3) Playing a game. Use one from the Mentor Corner or bring one from home. 4) Physical activity. Take a walk around the school grounds or play in the school gymnasium.

Mentors have many opportunities throughout the year to share their experiences. Their testimonials are poignant and heart-warming. Following are two that typify their experiences.

> The school held a Christmas concert to which students could bring their parents. My student's parents did not attend, and I was his only fan there. This created a strong bond between us. Each week I would ask him if he had come to school all week, as he had an attendance problem. If he had missed a day, I would ask why. I only missed one session with him throughout this past year; and when I came the following week, he asked me to write a paragraph as to why I was absent!

> The mentor program is one of the most satisfying experiences a person can have. We all read about children who grow up with unhappy childhoods. How sad it must be to look back on youth and see it as a lonely time. By giving just 60 minutes a week, we can become that flicker of light in a young life. We can make a difference. We can be that someone a youngster looks forward to. An hour a week is no sacrifice at all. We all waste more than that amount of time in any day. What a worthwhile way to spend time.

Field trips and giving gifts are discouraged, especially at the beginning of the relationship. Rather, we encourage building a relationship based on trust and friendship. However, mentors do take their students off school grounds on occasion with the permission and approval of the principal. When they do this, a field-trip form must be

signed by all parties to cover liability. (While the mentors are involved in the program, they are covered by the $2 million liability policy of the city of Norwalk. The school system has similar coverage for all other volunteers who perform duties at school or accompany students on field trips.) Mentors also must have a driver affidavit on file in the school office that includes proof of current automobile insurance.

Communication is important to the success of this program. Teachers of the students in the program communicate frequently with the mentors by telephone, notes, or in person. Teacher-mentor sessions can take just five minutes, or they can be scheduled for an entire faculty meeting. Whatever the length of time, mentors benefit from talking to teachers and support staff; and they learn many strategies for improving their students' attitude, behavior, and self-esteem. In addition, school psychologists, social workers, and guidance counselors (at the middle and high school levels) provide useful information about each student on a regular basis.

Throughout the year, mentors offer strategies that have worked for them. These are compiled monthly by the Mentor Director and shared with all through the *Norwalk Mentor Program Update*, a newsletter. The newsletter also serves to notify mentors of upcoming events, vacation schedules, summaries of research in the field, and results of yearly evaluations. A feature called the "Brag Corner" is used to highlight events at a company providing mentors or to profile an individual who has an unusual mentoring experience.

Step 5: Evaluation

Evaluation is an important component of the Norwalk Mentor Program. Attendance and attitudes in the classroom are monitored by teachers and other school staff. Students are administered a pre- and post-Self-Perception Inventory to measure improvement in the area of self-esteem. Twice each year, in January and June, teachers complete an informal "report card" for each student who has a mentor.

The report addresses Personal Growth (self-confidence, self-control, cooperation, and responsibility), Work Habits (listens attentively, follows directions, and completes tasks), and Academics (reading, writing, spelling). This report is given to the mentor and provides them with valuable input about the progress of their mentor relationship.

Mentors also complete an evaluation at the end of the year. They assess such areas as their effectiveness as a mentor, satisfaction with the student match, quality of assistance from school staff, relationship with their student, student progress made, impact on the student, awareness of the school system and education-related issues, and their feelings on returning to work. The teachers' and mentors' evaluations from the first five years of the Norwalk Mentor Program indicate that the program has achieved much success, with many benefits for the students, mentors, and staff involved. Following is a summary of the evaluation data:

- 96% of the mentors described their relationship with their student as excellent or good.
- 98% felt they made progress with their student.
- 85% felt they made an impact on their student's life.
- 54% improved their understanding of the school system.
- 83% felt better about themselves for having affected another person's life.

At the same time:

- 87% of the students improved their attendance at school.
- 92% improved their self-confidence.
- 96% showed greater cooperation in class.
- 91% improved their level of responsibility.
- 84% completed more tasks.

Step 6: Year-End Celebrations and Renewal

Throughout the year, school staff invite mentors for lunch, breakfast, tea, and thank-you parties. Each is an opportunity for con-

tinued communication and to show appreciation for their volunteer efforts.

At the end of the school year, the Mentor Director hosts a celebration for all mentors and staff involved in the program. At this time plaques are presented in such categories such as "top recruiter award," "first-year company award," "corporate sponsor award," and the like. Testimonies are given, and the highlight of the event is a slide show of every mentor with his or her student. This heartwarming and tear-filled celebration is a perfect way to close the year and to prepare to ask that most important question of the mentors: "Will you commit for another year?"

An important goal of the Norwalk Mentor Program is long-term commitment. Students benefit from having an advocate who will stay with them as long as they are needed. In Norwalk more than 90% of the mentors and their students continue together through the elementary and middle school years. In high school, they help their students during study halls and after school with homework. They give career advice and offer general support. They assist with preparation for the Scholastic Aptitude Test and with filling out college applications. Students who stay with a mentor through high school, graduate, and enroll in postsecondary education are eligible to apply for a scholarship set up by the program. The Norwalk Mentor Scholarship Fund has been supported by participating companies on a volunteer basis.

The Buddy System

Circumstances in some companies do not allow them to release an employee to work an hour a week as a mentor. Two companies in the Norwalk program have overcome this limitation by devising a buddy system in which two employees share the mentoring. When the program begins in September, two employees are paired and together visit their student for the initial session. Subsequently, they alternate weeks so that neither is away from work more than two hours a month. While not the ideal arrangement, the buddy system does

work well for some, especially when the two mentors are in close proximity at work and can update each other weekly on the progress of the student they share. This arrangement can be suggested to companies that cannot release large numbers of employees for a weekly session.

Transfers and Moves

In Norwalk, as in most districts, some students transfer from one school to another. Although each company "adopts" a school in which to work, the most important feature of the program is the relationship that develops between the individual mentor and student. Therefore, our mentors are flexible and are willing to follow their youngster to the next school. Of course, if a child moves out of the district, the rules change.

On occasion, employees will leave a company due to retirement, layoffs, or job changes. Each situation is assessed individually. The company liaisons are diligent about replacing mentors who will no longer be in the area. Other mentors who have taken new jobs in the area have even been successful in recruiting their companies to join the program. Employees who are laid off are allowed to continue whenever feasible.

Summer Activities

Mentor-student relationships do not end when schools close for the summer. The Norwalk program recommends that mentors continue their contacts with their students over the summer if possible, using such strategies as:

- Give your student three or four addressed and stamped envelopes with instructions to write you a note or letter periodically during the summer.
- If appropriate, give your student your business card and ask him or her to call you occasionally during the summer.

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- Give your student a small notebook and ask him or her to write down thoughts and feelings to share with you when you meet in the fall.
- If your student has a tape player, give him or her a tape of you reading a special story or a tape of your favorite music.
- Swap photos with your student to serve as a reminder when you are not there.
- Give your student a small pocket calendar and mark off the weeks until school reopens and you will see each other again.

Family Involvement with the Mentor Program

Involvement of parents or guardians is a vital component of any student mentor program. They must be encouraged to participate. In the Norwalk program, the school district conducts a workshop series in the evenings for parents and mentors. Babysitting and taxi fares, if needed, are paid through mini-grants provided by some of the companies involved in the program. Many of these parents had never come to school for parent meetings or teacher conferences. Data on parent involvement during the first years of the program indicate that 63% attended the parent-mentor evening workshop series on a regular basis, and 72% attended the spring parent-teacher conference. These data bode well for the future success of the program.

The workshops are led by professionals who are experts in their field. Recent workshop topics included: "Stress in the 90s," "AIDS Prevention," "How to Listen to Your Child," "How to Bridge the Communication Gap Between the Child and the Adult," "Drug and Alcohol Abuse School Programming," and "How to Read to Your Child."

Each parent of a student in the mentor program is sent an invitation before each workshop. One social worker enticed parents to her workshop with these warm words: "It will give you a chance to meet your child's mentor, taste delicious home-baked desserts, and enjoy a fun-filled evening. It is really important for you to come." The invitation is always followed up with personal telephone calls.

The family component of the Norwalk Mentor Program also includes scheduled luncheons at school, where mentors, parents or guardians, and students come together and talk as a team. Usually the school's PTO assists with greetings, food preparations, and funding. Meeting in such an informal, non-threatening setting, parents learn from the experts and from each other about how to be supportive of their children's education. At the same time, the mentors learn more about the family situation of their students and establish lines of communication with the parents.

One parent expressed her gratitude for the program with these words:

> I am a divorced mother, and this program has helped my son tremendously. My main concern was that Eric have a male role model to look up to. After my divorce, my son had frequent outbursts because he craved attention. He also had some difficulties getting along with his classmates. Since the mentor program, my son is more self-assured and has fewer of these outbursts. Just to have that knowledge that there is someone you look up to, who really cares about you, promotes you to want to do better. It really has made life on a day-to-day basis easier for us.

New Directions for Norwalk's Mentor Program

The Norwalk Mentor Program has a new component that addresses the needs of the pregnant teenager. Volunteer health professionals from the Fairfield County Chapter of the March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation train mentors who are interested in working with this target group. Their training program covers nutrition, prenatal visits to the doctor, child care, family budgeting, and other topics related to the needs of pregnant teenagers. These mentors agree to establish a one-on-one relationship that goes beyond building self-esteem and ensures that the young women will receive good medical care, have a friend there during delivery, and receive support after the baby is born. Encouraging the young mothers to stay in school and earn a diploma is another goal of this mentoring component.

Princeton University's Project 55, Inc., established by Ralph Nader and the Princeton class of 1955, provides an outlet for its alumni to become more actively involved in solving problems facing this nation. Project 55 has adopted mentoring as one of its priority projects and piloted its first effort in Norwalk. Currently, Princeton alumni who live and work in the area are recruited by using the same procedures the school district uses with local companies. This has proved to be a very successful way to find new resources for the program and has been expanded beyond Princeton. Project 55 assists us in recruiting other local alumni groups to work with Norwalk students in need of mentors. Project 55 has replicated the model in several Connecticut school districts and now is doing the same around the country.

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Mentoring Efforts Around the Country

Throughout the United States, many different forms of mentoring programs are being established at a rapid pace. Although they vary in their goals, programming, and clientele served, a common thread running through all of them is one-on-one involvement – caring adults making a positive impact on children and adults of all ages.

One of the oldest organizations that offers mentoring is Big Brothers/Big Sisters. For the past 88 years it has recruited adults and provided them with extensive training to serve as role models for children and youth. Other examples of mentoring efforts have been categorized by the Commonwealth Fund (Mahoney, n.d.) as follows:

- Formal career-oriented programs in which students are offered incentives, internships, and guidance about specific careers. These are sponsored by ethnic organizations, professional groups, service clubs, and other groups.
- Guided after-school study groups offered by schools, churches, or youth organizations.
- Mentoring programs sponsored by school districts through a nationwide network using computerized databases and management systems in their work with students.
- Colleges and universities that match their students as mentors with local high school students.
- Leadership training, drug-abuse and pregnancy prevention programs, classes in grooming and self-esteem, career planning, and the like offered through the YMCA/YWCA, Boys Clubs,

Girls Clubs, 4-H, Campfire, the National Youth Leadership Council, the NAACP, neighborhood centers, cultural organizations, and many other groups.

Students in Coweta County, Georgia, are benefiting from a mentor effort that includes recruits from the Georgia State Patrol and the local clergy, who share their time and talents with students at the elementary and secondary levels.

IBM's corporate mentorship program in Nashville, Tennessee, is for adult students with special needs and restrictive work schedules. The mentors serve as counselors who encourage, motivate, and advise individuals who range in age from 18 to 71. The students are enrolled at the Cohn Adult Learning Center, an accredited high school for educationally disadvantaged adults who did not graduate from high school.

At Castlemont High School in Oakland, California, a mentor program has been established by high school alumni who share their experiences with Castlemont students. The mentors include a professional ball player, politicians, police chief, fire captain, attorneys, business people, dentists, and artists. The program emphasizes orientation to the mentors' professions.

Mentors, Inc. in Washington, D.C., recruits mentors from law firms, corporations, and universities. The goal is to provide students with a mentor for all three high school years. Most of the students selected for the program are not in danger of dropping out but are at risk of not achieving their potential. Mentors, Inc. hopes to improve their school performance and focus their career plans.

Project RAISE (Raising Ambition Instills Self-Esteem) in Baltimore is a group of sponsoring organizations ranging from churches to banks. Each has adopted a class of sixth-graders and has promised them mentors through high school graduation. The mentors commit to at least one year of weekly contacts, including one-on-one contact twice a month. RAISE II adopts students in the second grade and offers them mentors through the start of high school.

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Some mentor efforts are culture-specific. One example is the Black Male Youth Enhancement Program at the Shiloh Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. It offers a comprehensive year-round program of cultural, educational, recreational, and spiritual activities serving at-risk boys, ages 9 through 16. It includes a daily after-school study hall and weekly group meetings with mentors to discuss critical concerns in the lives of these boys.

The Stamford, Connecticut, Mentoring Project is designed for single women coming off welfare. Each is assigned a successful career woman as a mentor, who acts as a role model and adviser. The goal is to help women in their attempts to move from welfare to employment. These women in transition are given the needed support to succeed.

Resources

Below is a list of publications and organizations that promote mentoring.

Beginning a Mentoring Program, by Michael Newman. Community and Human Resource Development Division, Minnesota Dept. of Human Resources, 444 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, MN 55155-3821.

Beginning a Mentoring Program. One Plus One, WQED, 4802 Fifth Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15213.

Career Beginnings Program. Center for Human Resources, The Heller Institute, Brandeis University, P.O. Box 9110, Waltham, MA 02254-9110. Also see fastback 293 *Career Beginnings: Helping Disadvantaged Youth Achieve Their Potential*, by Michael M. Bloomfield.

Connections: Linking Youth with Caring Adults. Urban Strategies Council, Thornton House, 672 13th Street, Oakland, CA 94612.

Coordinator's Guide to Oregon Community Mentorship Program. Student Retention Initiative, Business/Education Partnerships, 530 Center Street NE, Suite 300, Portland, OR 97310.

Linkletter. Center for Intergenerational Learning, Temple University Institute on Aging, 1601 N. Broad Street, Suite 206, Philadelphia, PA 19122.

The Mentor Handbook: A Guide for Adult Volunteers, Sponsoring Companies or Organizations and Schools Involved in a One-to-One Mentor/Student Support Program, by Susan G. Weinberger. Educational Resources Network, 18 Marshall Street, South Norwalk, CT 06854.

Mentoring Manual: A Guide to Program Development and Implementation. The Abell Foundation, 210 North Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21201.

Milestones in Mentoring. Guidebook and Audiovisual Aids, Project Literacy U.S., WQED, 4802 Fifth Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15213.

One On One: A Guide for Establishing Mentoring Programs. U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, S.W., Washington, DC 20202.

A Youth Mentoring Program Directory. United Way of America and One Plus One, National Initiatives, United Way of America, 701 North Fairfax Street, Alexandria, VA 22314.

Youth Mentoring: Programs and Practices, by Erwin Flaxman, Carol Ascher, and Charles Harrington. ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education, P.O. Box 40, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, NY 10027.

The Commonwealth Fund, Harkness House, 1 East 75th Street, New York, NY 10021-2692.

TMI, The Mentoring Institute, and ICM, International Center for Mentoring, Suite 510, 1200 West Pender Street, Vancouver, B.C., Canada VGE 2S9.

Appendix

Sample Recruitment Letter

To All Staff:

(Name of organization) has recently joined the (school district) in participating in a Mentor Program. We are, therefore, in need of volunteers to become mentors to local students this fall.

The Mentor Program matches one adult with one child in grades K through 12 from local schools. The children have been identified as being socially, economically, or educationally deprived; and many lack support from home.

The objective of this program is to improve attendance, attitude about school, academic performance, and most importantly, self-esteem and motivation. It is intended to prevent students from dropping out when they are older.

As a mentor, you would be released from work one scheduled hour each week to travel to (school) to work with a student on activities. Some examples are reading aloud, visits to the school library, playing games, or just talking together. Adult mentors are not expected to be teachers, but rather buddies or friends, providing a one-to-one supportive relationship.

If you are interested in this program and would like to volunteer your time, ask questions, or just hear more about it, there will be

a short presentation given by (person) at (time and date) at (location). Please contact (name and phone number of contact) if you will be attending or would like more information.

Please consider volunteering for the Mentor Program. Your support and participation are urgently needed to help these students achieve their potential and become contributing citizens.

Thank you,
Name and Title

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Sample Mentor Profile

Name of Mentor _____

Business Address _____

Title _____ Direct Dial Telephone _____

Preference of Day (Mon-Fri): Choice #1 ____ Choice #2 ____

Best Hour of Day (9 a.m.-3 p.m.):Choice #1 ____ Choice #2 ____

Do You Prefer: ☐ A Boy ☐ A Girl ☐ No Preference

☐ A Minority ☐ A Majority ☐ No Preference

☐ A "tougher" situation ☐ An "easier" situation ☐ No Preference

Write a brief statement on why you wish to be a volunteer in the Norwalk Mentor Program:

_____

_____

Describe any special interests that may be helpful in matching you and your student (for example, stamp collecting, roller skating, needlepoint, computers, baseball, foreign language, music, painting, etc.):

_____

_____

I would like to work with a child in Grade (circle):

Elementary: K 1 2 3 4 5 Middle: 6 7 8

High: 9 10 11 12

Mentor Pledge

I understand that the Mentor Program involves spending a minimum of one hour each week at the assigned school with my student from September to June. I understand that I will attend an orientation session and be involved in training during the year. I will be committing one school year in the program and will then be asked to renew for another year. I have not been convicted within the past 10 years of any felony or misdemeanor classified as an offense against a person or family, of public indecency, or a violation involving a state or federally controlled substance. I am not under current indictment.

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To the best of my knowledge and belief, all statements in this profile application are true and accurate.

_____ _____

Signature Date

Sample Mentor Agreement

As a volunteer mentor in the Mentor Program, I, _____, agree:

- To attend a training session before beginning.
- To be on time for scheduled meetings.
- To notify the school office if I am unable to keep my weekly mentoring session.
- To engage in the relationship with an open mind.
- To accept assistance from my student's teacher and support staff.
- To keep discussions with my student confidential.
- To ask school support staff when I need assistance or do not understand something.
- To notify the Program Director of any changes in my employment, address, and telephone number.
- To notify the principal if I wish to change my assigned student.

_____ _____

Signature Date

Sample Teacher Request for a Mentor

Requested By _____ School _____
Name of Student Needing Help _____ Grade_____
Student's personal interests/hobbies:

Reasons why this student would benefit by having a mentor:

Family relationships of interest to the mentor:

List below some specific strategies the mentor might use to assist this student (e.g., talking, reading, listening, playing games, etc.):

Additional comments:

Sample Parent Permission Letter

Dear Parents:

The _____ Public Schools have a special relationship with a number of local organizations. This year, our school has been lucky enough to be assisted by volunteers from _____. These volunteers will act as mentors (big brothers, big sisters, friends, buddies) to specially selected students.

Based on teacher and principal recommendation, your child, _____, has been chosen to work with _____ for one hour per week during the school day. The hour chosen is the time the teachers feel that the child will most benefit from the interaction with another adult on a one-to-one basis. The activities may be those recommended by the teacher or support staff, matching the needs of the child with the skills of the mentor.

In order to begin this program, we must have your permission. Please fill out the form below and return it to me immediately. Only then can we start your child in this very worthwhile experience.

Sincerely,
Principal

- -

Please detach here and return by (Date)

I hereby give permission for my child, _____, to work with a (Name of Organization) mentor in the Mentor Program.

Date: _____ Parent's Signature: _____

Student's Room #: _____ Student's Teacher: _____

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Sample Mentor Evaluation Form

Name of Mentor: _____

Company: _____

School: _____

Name of Your Student: _____

What is your general assessment of the Mentor Program?

- ☐ Very Successful
- ☐ Successful
- ☐ Moderately Successful
- ☐ Unsuccessful

Did you like working as a mentor this past year?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

How effective do you feel as a mentor? (Please check the appropriate response)

- ☐ Very effective
- ☐ Not very effective
- ☐ Effective
- ☐ Not at all effective
- ☐ Somewhat effective

Please indicate the reasons for your feelings: _____

_____

_____

How satisfied were you with your student match?

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Slightly Dissatisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Dissatisfied

Did you receive adequate assistance from staff at your school?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Explain: _____

_____

How would you describe your relationship with your student?

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Poor

Which activities/strategies worked best for you? _____

_____

What concerns do you have about the program? _____

_____

Do you feel you made progress with your student?

☐ Yes ☐ No

What impact do you think you made on your student's life? Please check the appropriate response:

☐ A great impact ☐ Little impact

☐ Some impact ☐ No impact

Has your involvement:

☐ Inspired your student to try harder?

☐ Helped to improve his/her grades?

☐ Helped to keep your student out of trouble?

As a result of your role as a mentor, I learned: (Please check the appropriate response)

☐ More about myself and more about others

☐ More about others, but little about myself

☐ More about myself, but little about others

☐ Little about myself and little about others

☐ Nothing at all

What do you think is the most valuable part of mentoring? ____

_____

In general, being a mentor has made me (check all which are applicable):

☐ Improve my understanding of the school system

☐ More aware of education-related issues

☐ Better able to relate to children

☐ Better able to relate to children from ethnic backgrounds different from mine

☐ Better able to understand my own values

☐ Feel better about myself for having a positive impact on another person's life

☐ Get along better with my own spouse
☐ Get along better with my own children
☐ Happier when I return to work
☐ Increase my own sense of responsibility
☐ Other (Please indicate): _____

Personal Information
Mentor is Male____ Female____
Mentor Age Group (Check):
____21-30 ____31-40 ____41-50 ____51-60 ____61-70 ____71+
Mentor is Single____ Married____ Divorced____
Your Job Title _____

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